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# Benton Big Sing (FA 648)

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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives  
 Special Collections Library  
 Department of Library Special Collections  
 Western Kentucky University  
 Bowling Green, KY 42101-1092

*Descriptive Inventory*

**FA 648      BENTON Big Sing – Benton, Kentucky**

1 box. 7 folders. 20 items. 1977-1996.  
 Originals, slides, cassette tape, videocassette tape, and book.

SC2012.179.49

**COLLECTION NOTE**

This collection features video and audio documentation of the Benton Big Sing held in Benton, Kentucky. Originally organized in 1884, the Benton Big Sing is held annually on the fourth Sunday in May. The event is considered to be the oldest indigenous musical tradition in the United States. During the festival, shape-note singers gather to sing from a tune book known as "The Southern Harmony." "The Southern Harmony" was compiled by William Walker and released in 1835. Included in this collection is a revised version of the shape note hymn and tune book.

The distinguishing feature of shape note singing is the use of four separate shapes that indicate notes according to the rules of solfege, or pitch and sight singing. The shapes include a triangle that indicates *fa*, a circle for *sol*, a square for *la*, and a diamond for *mi*. In order to avoid the excessive use of shapes, each shape except for *mi* was assigned to two notes of the musical scale. Therefore a major scale in the system would be noted as *Fa-Sol-La-Fa-Sol-La-Mi-Fa* and a minor scale would be *La-Mi-Fa-Sol-La-Fa-Sol-La*.

**SHELF LIST**

<b>BOX 1</b>	<b>BENTON Big Sing – Benton, Kentucky</b>	<b>1977-1996</b>	<b>20 items</b>
Folder 1	Inventory		1 item
Folder 2	Article	1987	1 item
Folder 3	"The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion" revised version	1987	1 item
Folder 4	Slides	1993	14 items

Folder 5	Recording of 93 <sup>rd</sup> Big Sing	1977	1 item
Folder 6	Recording of 107 <sup>th</sup> Big Sing	1990	1 item
Folder 7	Video of 113 <sup>th</sup> Big Sing	1996	1 item

### ***BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD***

FA BENTON Big Sing – Benton, 1977-1996  
648 Kentucky

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### ***SUBJECT ANALYTICS***

Festivals – Benton  
Music – Benton  
Shape note singing

Young/Jeffrey 01/13/2014